

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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R 101303Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2606

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SWEL, ELAB, ET

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST  
HOSPITAL

1. SUMMARY. BECAUSE OF A SLASH BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN  
LABOR LAW AND THE RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS OF THE SEVENTH  
DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, THE CHURCH MAY SHORTLY WITHDRAW FROM ITS  
HOSPITAL IN ADDIS ABABA. AS THIS IS THE BEST HOSPITAL  
IN ADDIS AND THE REMAINING HOSPITAL FACILITIES ARE BY  
NO MEANS ADEQUATE, LASS WOULD BE A SERIOUS BLOW TO BOTH  
THE LOCAL POPULATION AND THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY.

2. SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE WORLD-WIDE ORGANIZATION OF  
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH (MESSRS. W.D. EVA AND W.  
M. ADAMS FROM US AND E.W. PEDERSEN AND A.H. BRANDT FROM  
DENMARK) ARE CURRENTLY IN ETHIOPIA ENDEAVORING RESOLVE  
WHAT THEY SEE AS PROBLEM OF HAVING A TRADE UNION IN  
THEIR HOSPITAL IN ADDIS. THEY STATE THAT THEIR  
RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS PREVENT THEM FROM RECOGNIZING  
THE UNION, THAT THEY ARE CONSCIENTIOUSLY UNABLE TO ENTER  
INTO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITH THE UNION, AND THAT THEY  
CANNOT COPE IN A CHURCH INSTITUTION WITH THE INFLUENCES  
THAT DOMINATE THE THINKING OF LABOR UNIONS. IN PAST  
SEVERAL DAYS THEY HAVE BEEN CONSULTING WITH VARIOUS

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ETHIOPIAN AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING MEETING WITH MILITARY

COMMITTEE FROM DIRG, SEEKING MEANS TO RESOLVE THEIR DILEMMA.

3. EMPRESS ZAUDITOU HOSPITAL WORKERS'S UNION HAS ACTUALLY BEEN IN EXISTENCE SEVEN OR EIGHT YEARS. IN WAKE OF LABOR DISTURBANCES LAST MARCH AND APRIL UNION WAS REORGANIZED AND NEW ELECTIONS HELD. UNION APPLIED FOR NEW REGISTRATION WITH LABOR COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE IN APRIL AND RECEIVED CERTIFICATION. IT IS AFFILIATED WITH CELU WITH 207 MEMBERS, DUES FULLY PAID. DURING PAST NINE MONTHS UNION HAS ENDEAVORED TO BRING HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT TO NEGOTIATING TABLE AND, BEING UNSECCESFUL, APPEALED TO ETHIOPIUVABOR RELATIONS BOARD. ELRB UPHELD LEGALITY OF UNION'S POSITION AND RULED IT WOULD BE UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE FOR HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT TO REFUSE TO ENTER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

4. CHIEF LABOR COMMISSIONER TAFERRA HAS DESCRIBED MEETING WITH MILITARY COMMITTEE (AT WHICH TAFERRA WAS EVIDENTLY PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN) AS FULL EXPRESSION OF VIEWS ON ALL SIDES. AFTER HEARING ADVENTISTS, COMMITTEE EXPLAINED THAT PURPOSE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM BEING DEVELOPED IN ETHIOPIA WAS TO ENHANCE HARMONY AND COOPERATION BETWEEN WORKERS AND MANAGEMENT ALONG SAME LINES AS ADVENTISTS SOUGHT. IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT SINGLE EXCEPTION FOR ONE INSTITUTION WAS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER EXISTING LAW, BUT GOVERNMENT ALWAYS WILLING TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE AMENDMENTS TO MEET SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. IN PRESENT CASE, PROPOSAL WAS MADE THAT MANAGEMENT AND DULY ELECTED UNION REPRESENTATIVES SHOULD INITIATE DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUES AND PROBLEMS. FORMAL COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT NEED NOT BE CONCLUDED, BUT MINUTES OF MEETING COULD SERVE TO SHOW WHATEVER PROGRESS ACHIEVED TOWARD HARMONY AND COOPERATION, WHICH WOULD SATISFY ELRB RULING.

5. TAFERRA ALSO NOTED ADVENTISTS HAD DELIVERED LETTER, WHICH HE SAID WOULD BE ANSWERED PROMPTLY ON ABOVE LINES. IT WOULD ALSO STATE APPRECIATION OF CONTRIBUTION BY HOSPITAL AND ITS PROFESSIONAL STAFF AND DESIRE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT THAT INSTITUTION SHOULD CONTINUE IN OPERATION. TAFERRA WAS OBVIOUSLY PIQUED AT IMPLICATION THAT GOVERNMENT WAS FORCING HOSPITAL TO CLOSE, WHEN ALL THAT EXISTING LAW AND COMMON SENSE REQUIRED WAS FOR BOTH SIDES TO START TALKS AND SEEK RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES.

6. THE CHARGE HAS TALKED WITH ADVENTIST GROUP IN HOPES

OF PERSUADING THEM THAT A DECISION TO WITHDRAW FROM THEIR HOSPITAL WOULD HAVE A NUMBER OF MOST UNFORTUANTE CONSEQUENCES. HE POINTED OUT THAT ETHIOPIA'S NEED FOR THIS HOSPITAL OF SUPERIOR QUALITY IS VERY GREAT AND THAT THE NEED MAY SOON BECOME EVEN GREATER BECAUSE THE SWISS GOVERNMENT MAY WITHDRAW ITS SUPPORT FROM THE DUKE OF HARRAR HOSPITAL, LEADING TO ITS CLOSURE. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS NO HOSPITAL OF COMPARABLE QUALITY IN ADDIS AND THAT CLOSURE OF THE ADVENTIST HOSPITAL WOULD THEREFORE BE A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE MORALE OF AN ALREADY APPREHENSIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY. THE CHARGE POINTED OUT THAT ETHIOPIANS TEND TO MAKE NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN ACTIONS OF THE USG AND ACTIONS OF PRIVATE AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, AND THAT CLOSURE OF THE HOSPITAL WILL LIKELY BE REGARDED BY MANY AS EVIDENCE OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT BY THE USG AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. HE MADE THE FURTHER POINT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S RESENTMENT TOWARDS THE ADVENTIST CHURCH IF IT CLOSES ITS HOSPITAL MAY WELL LEAD TO ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS FOR REMAINING ADVENTIST INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS IN ETHIOPIA.

7. THE ADVENTIST LEADERS DID NOT DISPUTE THESE POINTS BUT RETURNED REPEATEDLY TO THEIR CONTENTION THAT REFUSAL TO DEAL WITH TRADE UNIONS IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS WHICH THEY COULD NOT VIOLATE WITHOUT FORFEITING THE RESPECT OF THEIR CHURCH MEMBERS. THEY ALSO CONTENDED THAT CONFLICTS WITHIN THE HOSPITAL WITH THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO EXERCISE LEADERSHIP IN THE LABOR UNION HAVE ALREADY CREATED SUCH DIFFICULTIES THAT PROPERLY TRAINED STAFF COULD NO LONGER BE PERSUADED TO REMAIN IN THE HOSPITAL IF THE UNION IS RECOGNIZED. IN VIEW OF THEIR ATTITUDE IT APPEARS UNFORTUNATELY ALL TOO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POSSIBLE THAT THE ADVENTISTS WILL SHORTLY WITHDRAW FROM THE HOSPITAL, IN WHICH CASE IT MAY HAVE TO CLOSE.  
WYMAN

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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